

exposing, subsequent to the selective etching, the silicon element to a second heat treatment in a vacuum at a second elevated temperature;

wherein at least one of the first and the second heat treatment is implemented with a radiant heating at a pressure of less than 0.1 μ bar.

34. (Amended) A method for etching, comprising:

exposing a silicon element to a first heat treatment in a vacuum at a first elevated temperature;

selectively etching the silicon element with a gaseous etching medium and forming gaseous reactive products, wherein the gaseous etching medium comprises chlorine trifluoride;

exposing, subsequent to the selective etching, the silicon element to a second heat treatment in a vacuum at a second elevated temperature, wherein at least one of the first and the second heat treatment is accomplished in a vacuum lock chamber;

transferring, subsequent to the first heat treatment, the silicon element from the vacuum lock chamber to a reaction chamber; and

transferring, prior to the second heat treatment, the silicon element from the reaction chamber to the vacuum lock chamber.

REMARKS

Amongst Claims 16-25 and 27-35 pending in the present application, claims 16-25 and 27-30 have been allowed, claims 31, 33 and 35 are rejected, and claims 32 and 34 are objected to, but the Examiner has indicated that claims 32 and 34 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form to include all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. In this Amendment, claims 32 and 34 have been rewritten in independent

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Claims 31 and 33 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable